



The Man in Seat 61...

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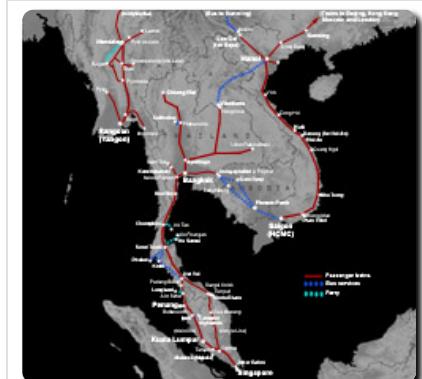
Train travel in Singapore & Malaysia .

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This page explains how to take the train from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, Penang & Bangkok, the cheap, historic and relaxed way to go...

Daily air-conditioned departures with amazingly cheap prices, comfortable sleeping berths, and great scenery. Taking the train is the safe, comfortable & adventurous way to travel overland between Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang & Bangkok. Unlike flying it's a real experience, and relaxing on a train on the traditional colonial single-track railway past palm plantations and little country stations is far more civilised than a cramped bus on an ugly modern motorway. Before 30 June 2011, you'd have left from the faded colonial grandeur of Singapore's 1932 art deco railway station, now you leave from [Woodlands Train Checkpoint](#) in the north of Singapore Island, rumbling slowly over the famous 1923-built causeway across the Johor Strait into Malaysia and through the palm plantations and jungle towards Kuala Lumpur. Singapore to Kuala Lumpur takes 6 hours by leisurely daytime train or 8 hours on a time-effective overnight sleeper, from just £7 or \$10 one-way. Kuala Lumpur to Butterworth (the station for the ferry to Penang) is of a similar length & cost; Butterworth to Bangkok on the daily 'International Express' costs around £23 or \$34 and takes less than 24 hours with a comfy sleeper & a restaurant for dinner & breakfast, [see the pictures here](#). The whole 1,233 mile Singapore to Bangkok journey can be done in just 48 hours including an afternoon in KL and a morning in Penang, but by all means stop off for longer in Kuala Lumpur or Penang. Or why not catch a ferry to Ko Samui or the bus to Phuket or Krabi? This page explains all you need to know, including train times, fares, what the trains are like & how to buy tickets.



[Click here for an interactive Southeast Asia train route map](#)

■ Train schedule information...

[Singapore – Kuala Lumpur – Penang – Bangkok \(The Main Line\)](#)[Singapore or KL – Khota Bahru \(The Jungle Line\)](#)

■ Train fares & how to buy tickets...

[Train fares](#)[How to buy tickets](#) by phone, by email, in person or online[What are Malaysian trains like?](#)[Singapore \(Woodlands\) station information](#)[Kuala Lumpur station information](#)[Penang & Butterworth information](#)

■ How to get to...

[Malacca](#)[Langkawi](#)[Batu Caves](#)[Kuala Lumpur Airport \(KLIA\)](#)[Cameron Highlands](#)[Perhentian Islands](#)[Singapore to Jakarta \(Indonesia\)](#)

■ Other information...

[Train travel in: Thailand Cambodia Vietnam Laos](#)[Useful country information:](#) currency, dialling code, tourist info...[Singapore to Bangkok by Eastern & Oriental Express luxury train](#)[Raffles Hotel, Singapore](#)[Hotels in Singapore & Malaysia](#)[Singapore Open Top Bus tour – hop on, hop off](#)[Flights to Singapore or Malaysia](#)[Travel insurance](#)[London to Singapore overland via the Trans-Siberian Railway](#)

■ Sponsored links...



Forget stressful planes or cramped buses. Take the train, put your feet up, enjoy the ride. These are the 1st class seats on a Kuala Lumpur to Singapore train, just 68 Ringgit (£12 or \$21) one way. A bit worn these days, but comfortable & far more of an experience than flying. Photo below courtesy Willy Kaemena.



Botswana
Egypt
Ethiopia
Gabon
Kenya
Mali
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia
Senegal
South Africa
Sudan
Tanzania
Tunisia
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Iran
Israel
Jordan
Syria
Turkey
Caucasus

Bangladesh
Burma
(Myanmar)
Cambodia
China
India
Indonesia
Japan
Kazakhstan
Laos
Malaysia
Nepal
North Korea
Pakistan
Philippines
Singapore
South Korea
Sri Lanka
Taiwan
Thailand
Uzbekistan
Vietnam

Canada
Cuba
Peru
South America
United States

Australia
New Zealand

■ Useful country information

Train operator in Malaysia: Keratapi Tanah Melayu (KTM), www.ktmb.com.my or www.ktmintercity.com.my (for train times, fares, [online booking](#)) [Map of train routes in Southeast Asia](#). Singapore metro: www.smrt.com.sg.

Time zone & dialling code: GMT+8 all year. Singapore dial code +65. Malaysia dial code +60.

Currency: £1 = 4.8 Ringgit = 2.0 Singapore dollars.

\$1 = 3.3 Ringgit = 1.4 Sin\$. [Currency converter](#)

Tourist information: www.tourism.gov.my & www.visitsingapore.com

Recommended guidebooks Health & vaccination advice

Flights: Scan multiple airlines to find the cheapest flights to Singapore & Malaysia

Hotels & hostels: [Recommended hotels in Singapore & Malaysia](#) Raffles Hotel, Singapore Backpacker hostels in SE Asia

Visas: UK citizens do not need a visa to visit Malaysia or Singapore.

Page last updated: 20 October 2012

■ Singapore - Kuala Lumpur - Penang - Bangkok

Train schedules for the main line between Singapore, Malaysia & Thailand...

Where you go is up to you... Here are the train schedules for the main line linking Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang & Bangkok. Feel free to take any train on any date between any two stations, it's up to you. All these trains run every day. Trains in Malaysia & Thailand run on metre-gauge track, narrower than European standard gauge. [How much does it cost?](#) [How to buy tickets](#).

Singapore to Bangkok by train: The whole train journey from Singapore to Bangkok is 1,920 km or 1,233 miles and involves two or three trains, depending on where you want to stop off. Look at the timetable below and create a journey that suits you. For a fast journey with just an afternoon at leisure in KL and a morning to explore Penang, you'd take train 2 from Singapore to KL in the morning, train 22 overnight from KL to Butterworth (Penang) then train 36 from Butterworth overnight to Bangkok. However, I'd recommend stopping at Kuala Lumpur and Penang for a bit longer as they are both fascinating cities. So take any train you like from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, either one of the daytime trains (train 2 or 12) or the overnight sleeper train (train 24). Stop over for a day or two, then take any train you like from Kuala Lumpur to Butterworth (the station for the ferry shuttle to Penang), there's a choice of two daytime trains (trains 10 or 2) or an overnight sleeper (train 22). Finally, take a [comfy sleeper](#) on train 36, the 'International Express' leaving Butterworth at lunchtime and arriving in Bangkok next morning. It's entirely up to you whether you travel from Singapore to Bangkok all in one go in 48 hours or stop off and see places on the way, as each train is booked & ticketed separately. All 3 trains can be booked at any railway station in Malaysia or Singapore or [by email with Malaysian Railways](#).

It's really not difficult to read this timetable! Each column is a separate train, and you read downwards. You can buy tickets for any train, between any two stations. So for example, in the second column you see that train number 2, with 1st & 2nd class seats, running daily, leaves Singapore Woodlands at 08:45, stops at Johor Bahru, Gemas, Tampin, calls at Kuala Lumpur at 14:56, calls at Ipoh and finally arrives at Butterworth (for Penang) at 21:20. You could change trains at KL onto train 20 to Hat Yai. Or you could stay on board till Butterworth, stay overnight and catch train 36 to Bangkok next day. It's up to you...

Singapore ► Kuala Lumpur ► Penang ► Bangkok

Train number (see the notes below):	10	2	20	170	12	22	36	24
Types of seat & sleeper on board (see the explanation below):	1,2	1,2	F,S,2,3**	2,3	1,2	F,S,2	S	L,S
Days of running:	daily	daily	daily	daily	daily	daily	daily	daily
Singapore Woodlands (Where is it? Check-in info)	depart	-	08:45	-	-	13:45	-	-
Johor Bahru	depart	-	09:12	-	-	14:18	-	-
Gemas	arr/dep	-	12:10	-	-	17:29	-	-
Tampin (for bus or taxi to or from Malacca)	arr/dep	-	13:00	-	-	18:26	-	-
Kuala Lumpur (Sentral station)	arrive	-	14:56	-	-	<u>20:25</u>	-	-
	depart	08:45	14:56	21:20	-	-	23:00	-
Ipoh (for bus to Cameron Highlands)	arr/dep	11:59	17:58	00:42	-	-	02:07	-
Butterworth (for Penang by frequent ferry)	arrive	<u>16:15</u>	<u>21:20</u>	*	-	-	<u>06:30</u>	-
	depart	-	-	*	-	-	-	14:20
Alor Setar (for Kuala Kedah & Langkawi ferry)	arr/dep	-	-	07:16	-	-	17:07	-
Arau (for Kuala Perlis & Langkawi ferry)	arr/dep	-	-	07:56	-	-	17:41	-
Padang Besar (Malaysian border, Malaysian time)	arrive	-	-	08:35	-	-	<u>18:18</u>	-

Gemas	arr/dep	-	-	-	12:04	17:03	-	01:59
Johor Bahru	arrive	-	-	-	15:27	20:02	-	05:32
Singapore Woodlands (Where is this?)	arrive	-	-	-	16:00	20:25	-	06:35

Notes by train number...

Train 1 & 2: Ekspress Rakyat. Runs every day. 1st & 2nd class seats with refreshment trolley, all fully air-conditioned.

Train 10 & 11: Ekspress Sinaran Utara. Runs every day. 1st & 2nd class seats, air-conditioned, refreshments.

Train 12 & 13: Ekspress Sinaran Selatan. Runs every day. 1st & 2nd class seats, air-conditioned, refreshments.

Train 20 & 21: Express Senandung Langkawi. Runs every day. Bypasses Butterworth, but calls at Bukit Mertajam some 11 miles from Butterworth by bus or taxi. Most of this train including the 1st class sleeper only run between Kuala Lumpur & Padang Besar on the Thai frontier. Just one Malaysian 2nd class sleeping-car & one 2nd class seats car run to/from Hat Yai in Thailand.

Train 22 & 23: Express Senandung Mutiara: Runs every day. 2nd class sleepers, 2nd class seats, all air-conditioned. See the sleeper photos below or watch the video. Should also have 1st class sleepers with 1 & 2 bed compartments, but reports in late 2012 suggest 1st class sleepers are either temporarily or permanently unavailable on this train.

Train 24 & 25: Ekspress Senendung Sutera: Runs every day. 1 & 2 berth deluxe sleepers with private shower & toilet, 2nd class sleepers, 2nd & 3rd class seats, all air-conditioned. See the sleeper photos below or watch the video.

Train 35 & 36: International Express (Ekspress Antarabangsa). Runs every day. Consists of two modern air-conditioned 2nd class sleepers between Butterworth & Bangkok provided by the State Railways of Thailand. Between Hat Yai & Bangkok, these are attached to a restaurant car, a 1st class sleeper & additional 2nd class sleepers. However, I recommend sticking with the excellent Thai 2nd class sleepers and not worrying about 1st class, it's really not necessary. History.

Train 41: Hat Yai-Surat Thani fast air-conditioned railcar with 2nd class reclining seats. Actually goes to/from Bangkok, but is not recommended for Bangkok passengers as it has no sleepers.

Train 170: rapid train, 2nd & 3rd class non-air-con seats.

How much does it cost? How to buy tickets?

See the fares section & the how to buy tickets section.

First class lounge...

Passengers with 1st class tickets (seat or sleeper) can use the VIP First Class Lounge at Kuala Lumpur Sentral station. The lounge isn't well signed. Walk in through the main entrance from the taxi rank at level 2, do a 180 degree turn to your right up the escalator to level 3, turn left at the top and immediately left again through the lift lobby to the lounge entrance. The lounge has seats, a TV and washrooms with free WiFi & complimentary soft drinks. It's open an hour before the departure of each train, you should leave it and join your train 15 minutes before departure.

Traveller's reports...

Traveller Sheena Clowes reports from regular journeys between Singapore, KL, Penang and Bangkok: I am an older lady who loves to travel alone and overland, so here are some recent pointers for added comfort for these journeys which I have made many times over the past few years, most recently today from Butterworth-Bangkok. First of all, the Internasional Ekspress (Butterworth-Penang) is late both leaving and arriving around 20% of the time. Be prepared for it, not stressed by it. For instance, it left yesterday at 15.45 instead of 14.20, and arrived in Bangkok at just before 2pm today. But even with my delaying for a cup of good coffee at the station in Bangkok, I was checking into my hotel at 2.45pm – I wouldn't be checking into a city-centre hotel 45 minutes after landing at Bangkok international airport, would I?!

Take some water and a light snack – biscuits, maybe – for the first few hours of the Internasional Ekspress when there is no restaurant car. If you forget, you can get food at the bus station just a short distance from the train station, or if you are coming from Georgetown, at the stalls at the jetty there. The Internasional Ekspress carries local passengers without reservations between the first station after Butterworth to the last station before Thailand, so don't spread your belongings out too much, you will end up with them all on your lap soon enough! There is also usually hot drinking water available at the end of the 2nd class sleeper for making tea, instant noodles, re-heating

The view from the train...



Seen from the train: A green and fertile landscape...



... and many palm oil and rubber plantations.



... with strange rock outcrops in places.



... a lake between Kuala Lumpur & Butterworth.



A first class coach on train 1 from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur and Butterworth (Penang. This car has been refurbished with reclining leather seats.

baby food etc. In the centre of these coaches there is an electricity point where you can recharge your phone. Make friends with the people sitting there, to keep an eye on it, and only take as long as you need (it doesn't need to be fully charged for a quick phone call) as other people need to charge their phones, too.

The lower berth on the Internasional Ekspress's 2nd class sleepers offers an unprecedented (in my experience) amount of space as it is a full metre wide. The size of the berth, and the way the curtains hang around them, and their length, means that even an arthritic old woman like me can change clothes in privacy and rearrange her overnight case. If you like to read in bed, take a book-light or head torch, and that if you need pitch darkness for sleeping, take some sort of eyeshade. You only get one pillow per berth, so fold up some soft clothing if you like your head higher. The cotton blanket that you are issued with is freshly-laundered and I find gives just the right degree of cosiness when wearing a T-shirt and cotton trousers. Some people are too cold – the air-conditioning is fairly fierce – and need to put on more clothes to keep warm! If you don't want an Asian breakfast or a rather strange

Western breakfast, you can just buy a cup of coffee for 30 baht. It's instant but good and hot and strong, just the ticket with a couple of Malaysian "breakfast biscuits" and a carton of yoghurt you bought the previous day in Butterworth or Georgetown. The food offered by the "Bogie Restaurant" (orders taken after crossing the border; dinner is served after Hat Yai and breakfast at whatever reasonable hour people are getting up) is generally very good if you like Thai food. The restlessness of the southern provinces of Thailand is evidenced by the armed guards on the train overnight and a policeman patrols the sleeper coaches randomly through the night – in stocking feet! However, I have never been aware of any problems in the border areas while I have been travelling.



Train 1, the Rakyat Express, about to leave Butterworth for Kuala Lumpur and Singapore...

Security warnings for parts of southern Thailand...

If crossing into Thailand, you should be aware of the security warnings for some parts of southern Thailand. These apply mainly to the eastern end of the Thailand–Malaysia border around Yala & Sungai Kolok, covering the provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and to a lesser extent Songkhla. The terrorists aren't targeting western travellers, but in these provinces, bombs have gone off outside bars and police stations, and the rail lines to Yala and Sungai Kolok have been affected on a number of occasions ([see map](#)). However, the main rail line from Singapore to Bangkok passes through the largely-unaffected western end of the Malaysia–Thailand border via Padang Besar. It does not pass through any part of Pattani, Yala or Narathiwat provinces, there's just a relatively short 80 km (50 mile) stretch through the northern part of Songkhla province via Hat Yai. I must emphasise that travellers should always take advice and be aware of the latest situation, I certainly don't claim to provide current security advice, your decision is entirely your own. But purely for myself, whilst I would not visit Sungai Kolok or Yala, I would not worry unduly about passing swiftly through 50 miles of the northern part of Songkhla Province on a direct train on the Singapore–Bangkok main line.

■ The Jungle Line...

Singapore or Kuala Lumpur to Gua Musang & Khota Bahru...

Most people use the main line from Singapore to KL, Penang, and Bangkok, which heads up the west coast of Malaysia. But there's alternative route up the east coast, through jungle scenery to Khota Bahru. It's possible to take this 'Jungle Line' from KL or Singapore to Khota Bahru, then a bus or taxi to the frontier, walk across the border into Thailand to Sungai Kolok railway station, and take a train to Bangkok (but see the [security warning](#)). It's worth making the effort to take a daytime train between Gemas & Khota Bahru (Wakaf Bahru), as the scenery is superb, and the direct trains from Singapore and KL travel at night. In Gemas, there's a fair hotel just outside the station, and there will be plenty of hotels with rooms to spare in Khota Bahru, even late at night when the train arrives at Wakaf Bahru.

Singapore & Kuala Lumpur ► Khota Bahru

Train number (see notes below):	Intercity trains				Local 'shuttle' trains				
	14	28	26	18	82	84	86	92	
Days of operation:	daily	daily	daily	Mon,Wed,Fri	daily	daily	daily	daily	
Classes:	2	F,S,2,3	S,2,3	F,S,2	3	3	3	3	
Singapore (Woodlands)	depart	05:30	–	19:00	–	–	–	–	08:00
Johor Bahru	depart	05:53	–	19:05	22:30	–	–	–	08:05
Kuala Lumpur	depart		20:30			–	–	–	
Tampin (for Malacca)	depart		22:48			–	–	–	
Gemas	depart	09:18	23:44	22:50	01:40	–	–	–	11:45
Kuala Lipis	arr/dep	13:41	04:10	03:25	06:10	05:20	–	14:30	<u>17:50</u>
Gua Musang	arr/dep	15:23	05:49	05:03	08:27	07:00	13:10	16:20	–
Tanah Merah	arrive	18:06	08:38	07:51	12:25	11:40	16:23	19:40	–
Pasir Mas (for bus to K. Bharu)	arrive	18:33	09:03	08:28	12:52	12:13	16:54	20:24	–
Wakaf Bharu (taxi to K. Bharu)	arrive	18:52	09:21	08:44	13:11	12:33	17:14	20:43	–
Tumpat	arrive	19:25	09:40	09:00	13:30	12:55	17:35	21:15	–

Key to classes:

L = [Deluxe sleeper \(Premier Night Deluxe\)](#), 1 or 2-bed compartments with private shower & toilet, air-conditioned.

F = 1st class sleepers (Premier Night Standard), 2-bed compartments with washbasin, air-conditioned.

F = 1st class sleepers (Premier Night Standard), 2-bed compartments with washbasin, air-conditioned.

S = 2nd class sleepers (Superior Night), upper & lower berths with curtains for privacy,

1 = 1st class seats (Premier). Reasonably luxurious if faded, m

2 = 2nd class seats (Superior). Comfortable, air-conditioned.

Train 14 & 15: Ekspress Sinaran Timur. Runs every day. 2nd seats, air-conditioned. No 1st class.

Train 18 & 19: Malayan Tiger. New train introduced Dec 2011 using ex-Japanese Railways 1st & 2nd class sleepers and 2nd class seats. Runs 3 times a week.

Train 26 & 27: Ekspress Senandung Timuran. Runs every day. 2nd class sleepers, 2nd & 3rd class seats. Air-conditioned. No 1st class sleepers.

Train 28 & 29: Ekspress Senandung Wau. Runs every day. 1st & 2nd class sleepers, 2nd & 3rd class seats. Air conditioned.

Trains 81-93: Run every day. 3rd class slow train, much older train with basic seats, not air-con. Please check the timetable for these trains locally, as it changes from time to time.

Quick links: [Fares](#) [How to buy tickets](#) [Map of train routes in Southeast Asia](#)

Which station for Khota Bharu? The closest station to Khota Bharu is Wakaf Bharu, about 5 km (3 miles) away. A taxi from Wakaf Bharu to Khota Bharu costs around 12 Ringgits. However, if you want to travel more cheaply by bus, there's a better and more frequent bus service from Pasir Mas, 19km from Khota Bharu. Buses run from Pasir Mas to Khota Bharu every 15–20 minutes from 06:45 to 19:00 from a bus station just 100 metres from Pasir Mas railway station. If you want to complete the whole train journey to Tumpat, no problem, buses also link Tumpat with Khota Bharu every 45 minutes 06:45–19:30. Bus information for all these routes is at www.cityliner.com.my, select 'Kelantan' then 'Khota Bharu' as your location. [Area map](#).

Heading for the Perhentian islands? See the [detailed ferry information here](#).

Heading into Thailand? Bus 29 runs every half hour from Khota Bahru bus station near the central market via Pasir Mas to the Thai/Malay border point at Rantau Panjang, fare 5 ringgits (£1), distance 45 km, journey time about 1 hour. A taxi will cost about 17 ringgits. Walk across the border from Rantau Panjang (Malay side) to Sungai Kolok (Thai side) and keep walking straight on for 800m to Sungai Kolok Railway station for trains to Hat Yai, Surat Thani & Bangkok. [Train information from Sungai Kolok to Hat Yai, Surat Thani & Bangkok](#). However, be aware of the [security warnings](#) for Sungai Kolok and parts of southern Thailand. [Area map](#).

Khota Bahru ► Kuala Lumpur & Singapore

Train type:		Intercity trains					Local 'shuttle' trains				
Train number (see notes below):	15	19	29	27	91	81	83	85	91		
Days of running:	daily	Sun,Tues,Thur	daily	daily	daily	daily	daily	daily	daily		
Classes:	2	F,S,2	F,S,2,3	S,2,3	3	3	3	3	3		
Tumpat	depart	07:00	17:00	18:45	20:30	-	03:50	07:45	14:00	-	
Wakaf Bharu	depart	07:16	17:16	19:02	20:47	-	04:08	08:04	14:17	-	
Pasir Mas	depart	07:33	17:33	19:18	21:04	-	04:25	08:22	14:35	-	
Tanah Merah	depart	07:59	17:59	19:45	21:32	-	04:55	09:34	15:03	-	
Gua Musang	arr/dep	10:51	21:13	22:34	00:24	-	08:47	<u>12:40</u>	18:56	-	
Kuala Lipis	arr/dep	12:33	22:52	00:14	02:15	08:15	<u>10:50</u>	-	<u>20:35</u>	08:15	
Gemas	arrive	17:08	03:39	04:32	06:28	12:44	-	-	-	-	12:44
Tampin (for Malacca)	arrive			05:49			-	-	-	-	
Kuala Lumpur	arrive			<u>07:55</u>			-	-	-	-	
Johor Bahru	arrive	20:58	07:20	-	09:55	17:10	-	-	-	-	17:10
Singapore (Woodlands)	arrive	21:20	-	-	10:15	17:25	-	-	-	-	17:25

How much does it cost? How to buy tickets...

See the fares section & how to buy tickets section.

First class lounges...

Passengers with 1st class tickets (seat or sleeper) can use the VIP First Class Lounge at Kuala Lumpur Sentral station.

Traveller's reports from The Jungle Line...

Traveller Jeff Brown travelled from Singapore to Bangkok via the Jungle Line in 2012: "I took a bus from Kota Bharu to Rantau Panjang [= the Malaysian side of the border] and then made my way across the border and to the train station by foot. I was somewhat more vigilant than usual given the security issues in the past, but luckily my trip out of that area was uneventful. Military presence was very high at SK station as well as on the train and didn't seem to let up until Hat Yai Junction. The inbound train was three hours delayed arriving, but the crew turned it around fast and we departed only 30 minutes behind schedule at about 14:50. SK station does not have a left luggage desk, probably owing to security concerns. If you end up in Sungai Kolok early (which some will by virtue of forgetting about the -1 hour time difference), there are markets on the nearby streets, but I didn't find much in the way of restaurants or street food stalls. After 30 minutes looking futilely with a heavy pack, I punted and had lunch at the Genting Hotel, about 100m south of the station on the main N/S road. It's a 3-star hotel with a proper restaurant and good AC! I travelled 2nd class and it was awesome, the best experience I've had compared to travelling by rail in India, Vietnam and Malaysia. Cabin was clean and totally functional. Attendants cleaned the train (including toilets) throughout the trip, which made a big difference since the trip was 20 hours total. Dinner was served at my seat (they have an English food menu also) and they will also bring beer to your seat. This in addition to the usual hawkers that jump on at each station and make the rounds selling snacks. 2nd class was nearly empty at departure and filled up gradually. For the last hour or so of the journey, it was nearly empty again. We arrived about 90 minutes late in Bangkok."

Traveller Henrik Meurs took the slow train from Gemas to Wakaf Bahru. "The trip on the Jungle Railway to Kota Bahru is one of the most beautiful train trips possible. The scenery can only be described as breathtaking. There are quite a few stops during the first two or three hours. After that, villages become rare and the train starts climbing the first flat mountains. From then on we enjoyed endless views over primary rain forest, large trees interrupted by exuberant plants and monkeys at play. After 4 or 5 hours, when you just start to think that you might have seen all the wonders the Malaysian jungle has to offer, the train enters the mountains. Words fail me to describe the beauty of the scenery of these two or three hours during which the engine pulls you through the mountains topped with rain-forest, over wooden bridges and through narrow gorges. The fare was just 21 Ringgit, about \$5..! Unlike the modern Malaysian trains on the direct sleeper trains to/from Singapore and KL, slow train 91/92 is old and basic, but the ride more than makes up for this. There is plenty of local transport available from Khota Bahru to the Thai frontier at Sungai Kolok. Train times from Sungai Kolok to Bangkok are shown on the [Thailand page](#) under 'Bangkok to Southern Thailand'."</div>

■ Fares

Malaysian rail fares are very cheap. You can check fares on the KTM website, www.ktmb.com.my. Note that Kuala Lumpur is listed under 'S' as 'Sentral Kuala Lumpur', Johor Bahru is listed as 'JB Sentral', and Singapore is now shown as 'Woodlands'. KTM now calls 1st class 'Premier' and 2nd class 'Superior'.

One-way fare in Ringgits or Singapore \$:	3rd class seat	2nd class seat	1st class seat	2nd class sleeper	1st class sleeper	Deluxe sleeper with shower & WC
There is no such thing as a Singapore to Bangkok ticket. The cost of a Singapore to Bangkok train journey is the sum of the fares for each train you take, Singapore to KL, KL to Butterworth, Butterworth to Bangkok.						
Singapore to Bangkok						
Singapore to Kuala Lumpur *	-	S\$ 34 (£17, \$26)	S\$ 68 (£34, \$50)	S\$ 46 (£22, \$33)	-	S\$ 139 (£66, \$99)
Singapore to Butterworth (Penang) *	-	S\$ 60 (£30, \$47)	S\$ 127 (£63, \$97)	-	-	-
Singapore to Wakaf Bharu or Tumpat *	S\$ 30 (£15, \$22)	S\$ 41 (£21, \$32)	-	S\$ 54 (£27, \$41)	-	-
Singapore to Johor Bahru *	-	S\$ 5 (£2.50, \$4)	S\$ 10 (£5, \$7)	-	-	-
Johor Bharu to Kuala Lumpur	-	RM 33 (£7, \$10)	RM 64 (£13, \$20)	RM 45 (£9, \$14)	-	RM 135 (£28, \$43)
Johor Bharu to Butterworth (Penang)	-	RM 58 (£12, \$18)	RM 122 (£26, \$40)	-	-	-
Kuala Lumpur to Butterworth (Penang)	RM 17 (£4, \$5)	RM 34 (£7, \$10)	RM 67 (£14, \$20)	RM 43 (£9, \$13)	RM 85 (£18, \$26)	-
Kuala Lumpur to Singapore	-	RM 34 (£7, \$10)	RM 68 (£14, \$21)	RM 43 (£9, \$13)	RM 86 (£18, \$25)	RM 131 (£27, \$40)
Kuala Lumpur to Butterworth (Penang):	RM 17 (£4, \$5)	RM 34 (£7, \$10)	RM 67 (£14, \$20)	RM 43 (£9, \$13)	RM 85 (£18, \$26)	-
Kuala Lumpur to Hat Yai	-	RM 44 (£9, \$13)	-	RM 57 (£12, \$17)	-	-
Kuala Lumpur to Tumpat or W. Bharu	RM 29 (£6, \$9)	RM 39 (£8, \$12)	-	RM 52 (£11, \$16)	RM 106 (£22, \$32)	-
Butterworth (Penang) to Bangkok	-	-	-	RM 112 (£23, \$34)	-	-
Butterworth (Penang) to Surat Thani	-	-	-	RM 101 (£21, \$30)	-	-
Butterworth (Penang) to Singapore	-	RM 60 (£12, \$18)	RM 127 (£26, \$38)	-	-	-
Wakaf Bharu or Tumpat to Singapore	S\$ 30 (£6, \$10)	S\$ 41 (£9, \$12)	-	S\$ 54 (£11, \$16)	-	-
Kuala Lumpur to Tumpat or W. Bharu	RM 29 (£6, \$9)	RM 39 (£8, \$12)	-	RM 52 (£11, \$16)	RM 106 (£22, \$32)	-

* If your ticket is bought or collected in Singapore, [read the paragraph below](#). For historical reasons, tickets starting in Singapore are charged in S\$, for example RM34 (£7) becomes S\$34 (£17), so it's cheaper to buy an online ticket starting from JB Sentral, charged in Ringgits, then buy a separate ticket from Woodlands to JB Sentral ticket at Woodlands station just before departure.

Children aged 0 to 3 travel free, children aged 4 to 11 travel at half fare, children aged 12 and over pay full fare.

Over 60? There's a 50% discount on Malaysian inter-city train fares for anyone aged over 60, including foreigners, though you cannot get this online, only in person showing your passport.

Sleeper fares shown above are per person for lower berths. Upper berths are about 14% cheaper.

When checking fares or [booking online](#) at www.ktmb.com.my, classes and class codes are as follows:

AFC = 1st class seats (also known as "Premier")

ASC = 2nd class seats (also known as "Superior")

AEC = 3rd class seats (also known as "Economy")

ADNS = 2nd class sleeper (also known as "Superior Night")

ADNFB = 1st class sleeper (also known as "Premier Night Standard")

ADNF = deluxe 'Selesa' sleeper with private shower & toilet (also known as "Premier Night Deluxe")

Important: Tickets bought in Singapore are double the price ...

A strange (you might say unfair) quirk of the system is that for historical (and probably now financial) reasons, tickets bought in Singapore must be paid for in Singapore dollars, but at the Ringgit amount. In other words, if the fare is 34 Ringgit, you'll be charged 34 Singapore dollars if you buy it in Singapore, even though 34 Ringgit is £7 (\$10) and S\$34 is £17 (\$24)! Crazy, eh?! And it's even more crazy now that the Singapore element is just a short 5 minute ride across the causeway from Woodlands to Johor Bahru. This also applies to tickets for any journey starting in Singapore Woodlands booked online using the [e-ticketing facility on](#)

www.ktmb.com.my and to tickets booked through the Malaysian Railways call centre and collected in Singapore. In fact, if you book online it's even more confusing, as the online system converts the Singapore dollar amount back into Ringgits again, having taken the 34 Ringgit fare, read it as 34 Singapore dollars, converted the \$34 back into 82 Ringgits and so (at current exchange rates) it charges you 82 Ringgits for a 34 Ringgit fare. For most westerners this is not an insurmountable problem as the fares are so cheap anyway. £7 becoming £17 won't have a huge impact on a £1,000 holiday. But here are some tips to avoid paying more than you have to:

- Tip 1, the easiest way around this is to buy a ticket starting in Johor Bahru rather than Woodlands, then buy a separate Woodlands to Johor Bahru ticket. For example, instead of buying a ticket from Woodlands (Singapore) to Kuala Lumpur, buy a ticket from Johor Bahru to Kuala Lumpur at Malaysian prices using the [e-ticketing facility on www.ktmb.com.my](#) and self-print your ticket with a confirmed reservation on the train, then simply buy a S\$5 (£2.50 or \$4) one-way 2nd class seat ticket from Woodlands to Johor Bahru for the same train either as a second transaction using the same [e-ticketing facility on www.ktmb.com.my](#) (sometimes it will let you buy a Woodlands-JB ticket, though at times they have prevented it, but give it a try) or you can simply in person at the KTM ticket counter at Woodlands at least half an hour before the train goes. [Feedback](#) is always be appreciated!
- Tip 2, you should book a return journey from Singapore to KL as two separate one-way trips so at least the return leg will be charged in Ringgits. If you booked it as a return, both legs of a return ticket starting in Singapore will be charged in Singapore dollars. But a one-way ticket starting in Malaysia is charged in Ringgits.
- Tip 3, if you book your trains [by email or phone with Malaysian Railways](#), make sure you collect only the Singapore-KL ticket in Singapore (biting the bullet and paying in Singapore dollars), but wait till you get to KL to collect your KL-Penang & Penang-Bangkok tickets so you can pay for them in Ringgits. If you collect all the tickets in Singapore, you'll have to pay for all of them in Singapore dollars.
- Tip 4: For a one-way journey from Singapore to KL in (say) a deluxe sleeper, you can use the online [e-ticketing facility on www.ktmb.com.my](#) to book a return journey from KL to Singapore & back, consisting of a dummy outward trip from KL to Singapore in the cheapest 2nd class seat (which you won't use), then a 'return' leg from Singapore to KL in the deluxe sleeper (which you will use). This way, it's a return journey starting in Malaysia so you will be charged in Malaysia Ringgits, which in this case will save money compared with paying twice the price for a one-way deluxe sleeper starting in Singapore, even allowing for the cost of the unused seat ticket from KL to Singapore. It's not rocket science really!
- Some people avoid paying in Singapore dollars, by taking local transport across the causeway to Johor Bahru (the first station in Malaysia) so they can take the train from there. Personally, I'd rather start my journey in Woodlands and travel across the causeway by train, so the journey officially starts in Singapore!

■ How to buy tickets

Do I need a reservation?

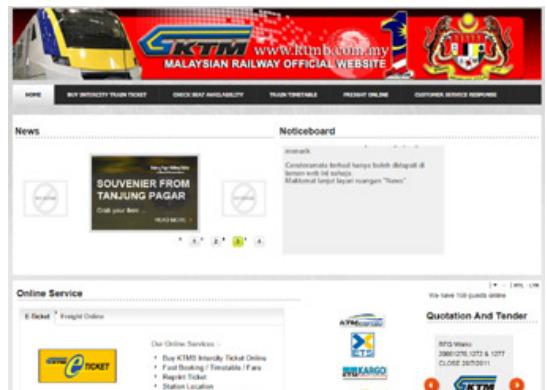
Yes. All long-distance trains in Malaysia and Thailand are 'reservation compulsory', and tickets always include a seat or sleeper reservation on a specific train. You cannot 'hop on and off' without a reservation. Malaysian train reservations open 60 days before departure, Thai trains open 60 days before departure.

Can I stop off along the way? Can I hop on and off?

Yes, you can stop off wherever you like for as long as you like. But you cannot buy an open ticket and hop on and off trains at random. In fact, there is no such thing as a 'Singapore to Bangkok ticket', you must buy a separate ticket for each individual train journey you make, and the ticket will be printed with a specific seat or berth number on a specific date on a specific train. You can buy all your tickets in advance or keep your options open and buy them at the station as you go along, it's up to you. If there are seats still available (as there usually are), you can buy tickets right up until the train leaves.

What's the best way to buy tickets?

- You can buy train tickets (1) at the station, (2) online at www.ktmb.com.my or (3) by phone or email to the KTM (Malaysian Railways) call centre.
- Northbound journeys from Singapore to Bangkok: You can pre-book a northbound trip from Singapore to Bangkok by emailing or phoning the KTM call centre [as explained here](#), requesting reservations on each of the three trains you need to book, [see the timetable above](#). Remember that KTM (Malaysian railways) can book trains within Malaysia and departing from Malaysia into Thailand, but they cannot book trains wholly within Thailand, or train 35 from Thailand back into Malaysia. Alternatively, you can book train numbers 1 to 29 [online using www.ktmb.com.my](#), although train 36 Butterworth to Bangkok cannot be booked online, so you'll still need to email or call KTM for that ticket.
- Southbound journeys from Bangkok to Singapore: You can pre-book a southbound trip from Bangkok to Singapore by first booking the International Express (train 35) from Bangkok to Butterworth via Thai booking agency www.thailandtrainticket.com. Then book your Butterworth to KL & KL to Singapore trains either at the station when you get to Butterworth or [online in advance using www.ktmb.com.my](#) or [by phone or email to the KTM call centre](#).



Buy train tickets online or by email... You can book trains between Singapore, Kuala Lumpur & Butterworth (Penang) online at www.ktmb.com.my, up to 60 days in advance. The Butterworth-Bangkok train needs to be booked by email, phone or in person. Read the advice here first!



...Or buy train tickets in person. This is the KTM InterCity ticket counter at KL Sentral Station...

Buying tickets at the station...

You can buy tickets at Woodlands train checkpoint in Singapore or at any railway station in Malaysia, up to 60 days in advance. KTM has a computerised reservation system, so the KTM ticket offices at Singapore Woodlands, Kuala Lumpur, Butterworth or any other Malaysian station (including the KTM ticket office at the Georgetown ferry terminal in Penang) can sell tickets and make reservations for any train journey within Malaysia, or starting in Malaysia heading into Thailand, including Butterworth to Bangkok.

Singapore's Woodlands station ticket counter accepts American Express & Diners Club credit cards, but not Visa or MasterCard. The ticket offices at Kuala Lumpur Sentral, Butterworth & Georgetown (Penang) accept MasterCard & Visa.

Stations in Malaysia & Singapore cannot book seats or berths on trains wholly inside Thailand, nor can they book return journeys from Thailand back to Malaysia on train 35 (although they can book train 21), because they cannot access the Thai Railways reservation system. Just book the return journey from Bangkok to Malaysia when you get to Bangkok, or by email with the State Railways of Thailand or by email with a recommended Thai travel agency such as www.thailandrainticket.com, as explained on the Thailand page.

You can buy all the tickets you need for a Singapore to Bangkok journey at Singapore's Woodlands station. However, tickets bought in Singapore will **cost twice as much** as one picked up and paid for in Malaysia, so it's better to buy just your Singapore-Kuala Lumpur ticket at Woodlands, then buy the Kuala Lumpur-Butterworth and Butterworth-Bangkok tickets when you get to Kuala Lumpur. You can still book the KL to Butterworth and Butterworth to Bangkok trains in advance, using internet or email as shown below.

Buy tickets online: www.ktmb.com.my... Direct link to sales: <https://intranet.ktmb.com.my/e-ticket/login.aspx>

You can book Malaysian train tickets online. It seems to work better in Firefox or Chrome than IE.

- What trains can you book online? The www.ktmb.com.my e-ticketing system will book any express train running wholly within Singapore & Malaysia, in other words trains 1 to 29.
- Can it book trains to or from Thailand? It will book the KTM-run international train 20 or 21 between Kuala Lumpur and Hat Yai in Thailand in either direction, northbound or southbound. However, it cannot book the Thai-run 'International Express' from Butterworth to Bangkok (train 36), which you should book either by email or in person at any KTM station, [see the next section](#).
- When do bookings open? 60 days before departure.
- How to book online: Go to www.ktmb.com.my, the Malaysian railways (KTM) website, and use the journey planner on their home page to find a train. On the results page, click 'Proceed Purchase Ticket'. Alternatively, a direct link to the booking system is <https://intranet.ktmb.com.my/e-ticket/login.aspx>. Now book your train(s).
- How are tickets delivered? You pay online by credit card and print out your own ticket. Or you can collect the tickets from any KTM railway station, including Singapore (Woodlands).
- Singapore is now shown under 'W' as 'Woodlands CIQ'.
- Kuala Lumpur is shown in the list of destinations under 'S' as 'Sentral Kuala Lumpur'!
- Johor Bahru is shown in the list of destinations as 'JB Sentral'
- Prices for tickets starting in Singapore: If you are booking tickets starting in Singapore, read the [Tickets bought in Singapore](#) section, as the Singapore dollar fare will apply, converted back into Ringgits. In other words, a 40 Ringgit fare for a journey starting in Singapore will be charged as 40 Singapore dollars then converted back into Ringgits, in this example about 91 Ringgits. Crazy, but true. It's cheaper to buy tickets starting at JB Sentral, then simply buy a local Woodlands to JB Sentral ticket at the station at Woodlands, just before departure.
- What is 'coach label/slot'? It means coach number. The confusingly-named "Label/slot" field on the booking form simply allows you to pick your coach (for example, coach 'J1') then when you click 'view' it will show you the available seats or berths in that coach, allowing you to pick one (for example, 5A, 5B, etc).
- Which are the best seats or berths to choose? See the choosing the best seats or berths section for some useful tips!
- Classes are as shown follows:
 - AFC = Aircon First Class seats ("Premier")
 - ASC = Aircon Second Class seats ("Superior")
 - AEC = Aircon Economy Class (3rd class) seats ("Economy")
 - ADNS = 2nd class sleepers ("Superior Night")
 - ADNFB = 1st class 2-berth sleepers ("Premier Night Standard")
 - ADNFD = deluxe 2-berth sleepers with shower & toilet ("Premier Night Deluxe")
- If you have any problems with the online system, by tickets by phone or email as shown below...

Buy tickets by phone or email: callcenter@ktmb.com.my, +60 3 2267 1200 from overseas, 1-300-88-5862 local.

To book Malaysian trains by phone or email with the KTM (Malaysian railways) call centre, simply email your booking request to callcenter@ktmb.com.my or call them on + 60 3 2267 1200 (calling from outside Malaysia) or 03 2267 1200 (calling from within Malaysia). You can also book the Thai-run Butterworth to Bangkok train this way.

Your email must specify the train number you want to book between which stations on which date and in which class. It must include the names, sex & passport numbers of each traveller.

Malaysian Railways will usually reply within about 4 days with a reference number which you can quote when you pick up and pay for your tickets in Malaysia or Singapore. Remember that tickets picked up and paid for in Singapore **will cost twice as much** as those picked up in Malaysia, so it is best to pick up only your Singapore-Kuala Lumpur ticket at Singapore Woodlands station, then wait until you get to Kuala Lumpur to pick up the remaining tickets so you can pay in Ringgits. They'll give you a deadline by which to collect & pay for your tickets, usually the day before.

You can book a complete northbound Singapore to Bangkok journey by email or phone in this way. But please remember that you're not asking for "a Singapore to Bangkok ticket" as there's no such thing, you're asking for 3 separate tickets on 3 separate trains, each reserved for whatever date you want: Singapore-KL, KL-Butterworth & Butterworth-Bangkok. Note that KTM's call centre (and for that matter, their ticket offices) can book the northbound Butterworth to Bangkok International Express train, but they cannot book the southbound train starting in Bangkok, or for that matter any Thai trains wholly within Thailand. A southbound journey from Bangkok to Malaysia must either be booked at Bangkok station when you get there, or booked by email with the State Railways of Thailand or several recommended Thai travel agencies such as www.thailandtrainticket.com, as shown on the Thailand page.

Choosing the best seats or berths...

On the trains between Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Butterworth (Penang), it can help to know how the seats are arranged, as you can choose a specific seat when booking online, and can request seating options when booking at stations or by email or phone:

- On daytime trains, seats are numbered by row (1 to 15 in 2nd class, 1 to 12 in 1st class) and lettered by seat across the width of the car, A-aisle-B-C in 1st class, A-B-aisle-C-D in 2nd class. So seat 7C is in row 7, and it would be a window seat if it's first class, an aisle seat if in 2nd class.
- In 1st class, seat 'A' is a solo seat (both window and aisle), seats 'B' and 'C' are two seats abreast on the other side of the aisle, 'B' aisle, 'C' window. First class seats can be rotated, so normally almost all face the direction of travel.
- In 2nd class, seats cannot rotate. Rows 1 to 8 normally face forwards when travelling from Singapore northwards (and rows 9 to 15 backwards), and rows 9 to 15 face forwards when travelling southwards (rows 1 to 8 backwards).
- Rows 1 and 15 in 2nd class have relatively poor window views, being at the end of the car facing a large TV screen. Similarly, rows 1 and 12 in 1st class are at the extreme ends of the car and have a poor view from the window. Pick a seat in the middle of the car.
- When booking 2nd class sleepers, lower berths are wider than upper ones, which is why they're a fraction more expensive. Pick berths in the centre of the car, away from the end doors as these will be quieter, away from the wheels, with no draughts from the door.

■ What are Malaysian trains like?

Daytime express trains...

Daytime express trains between Singapore & Kuala Lumpur are modern and air-conditioned. They have 1st & 2nd class seats, marketed as 'Premier' & 'Superior'. The trains have a refreshment trolley and buffet car with a very limited selection of drinks and snacks, but it's a good idea to bring your own food and drink along.



First class (Premier, AFC) seats are quite luxurious, although well worn. They recline & can be rotated to face each other or the direction of travel.



A refreshment trolley serves complimentary cake and water in first class. Instant coffee costs a few ringgits.



Second class (Superior, ASC) seats are also very comfortable, although they cannot be rotated...



The Rakyat Express from Butterworth (Penang) to Kuala Lumpur & Singapore calls at a wayside station.

[Virtual tour - 1st class](#)

[Virtual tour - 2nd class](#)

[Video - Singapore - KL by train](#)

Overnight trains: 2nd class sleepers (Standard Night, ADNS)...

All Malaysian overnight trains have modern 2nd class sleepers, marketed as 'Standard Night'. They are a great way to travel, and are safe, comfortable, cheap and fun too. In some ways, they are more fun than the closed compartments of the first class sleepers! They are open-plan, with upper and lower berths arranged along each side of a central aisle running down the middle of the coach. Each bunk has curtains for privacy, and a nice touch in these Malaysian sleeping-cars is that the upper berth has its own

window. Upper berths are cheaper than lower berths, but they are narrower, so ask for a lower berth if possible, especially if you are over 6' 2". All necessary bedding is provided, with blankets and fresh clean sheets. These sleepers are available on all overnight trains in Malaysia, including Singapore-Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur-Butterworth (for Penang)-Hat Yai (in Thailand), Singapore-Tumpat (Khota Bharu) and Kuala Lumpur-Tumpat (Khota Bharu). The Butterworth (Penang)-Bangkok sleepers are similar, but provided by the Thai Railways, [see below](#).



Virtual tour - 2nd class sleepers



Video - taking the sleeper train to KL



Overnight trains: 1st class sleepers (Premier Night Standard, ADNFB)...

If you would prefer an enclosed private room, go for a first class sleeper. These older first class sleeping-cars are very comfortable, and they operate on the Kuala Lumpur-Butterworth (Penang) and Kuala Lumpur-Tumpat (Khota Bharu) overnight trains, but not on the Singapore-KL sleeper train. These 1st class sleeping-cars, marketed as 'Premier Night', have private lockable air-conditioned 2-berth compartments with washbasin, opening off a side corridor. All necessary bedding, towels and toiletries are provided. Passengers travelling alone can either pay for both berths OR book one berth in a 2-bed compartment and share with another civilised sleeper passenger of the same sex. There are toilets at the end of the corridor.



Overnight trains: Premier Night Deluxe sleepers (ADNFD)...

The Singapore-Kuala Lumpur overnight train has a deluxe sleeping-car, with 1 or 2-bed private rooms with en suite toilet & shower. See www.ktmb.com.my for a 360° virtual tour. Two armchairs face each other over a table. At night, the seat converts to a lower berth and an upper bed folds out from the wall. A simple packed meal, served in your compartment, is included in the fare. All necessary bedding, towels and toiletries are provided. There's even a TV in the room, which may or may not work! The private toilet/shower room comes complete with electric hairdryer. It's fully carpeted, but this being Southeast Asia, expect the carpet to be grubby, just don't expect western standards! [More photos of the deluxe sleeper](#). [Virtual tour of deluxe sleeper](#)



Deluxe sleeper, armchair in evening position.



Deluxe sleeper in night mode, with seats made up into lower berth.



Deluxe sleeper: View into the private shower & toilet.

The International Express (train 35/36) from Butterworth to Bangkok...

The 2nd class air-conditioned sleepers on train 35/36 are provided by the State Railways of Thailand. There are no 1st class sleeping-cars on this train, apart from the one that is attached between Hat Yai & Bangkok, which cannot be reserved from Malaysia. However, there's no need to travel 1st class, as the 2nd class sleepers shown here are perfectly good, clean and comfortable. The curtains at night on each berth, and the bays of two seats with partitions, give you all the privacy you really need. Today's 'International Express' is the descendant of the 'Southern Express' which started in 1922, see [history of the International Express](#).



This is the International Express from Bangkok at Butterworth (Penang).



By night, upper & lower berths, each with curtains for privacy...



Cars are open-plan, with bays of seats either side of the aisle.



By day, a pair of spacious armchairs for two people, very civilised...

A restaurant car is attached between Hat Yai and Bangkok, for dinner & breakfast. The food is remarkably cheap and good, a set meal costs around 150–200 baht (£3–£4 or \$5–\$6). You choose from a leaflet with both pictures and English captions. Beer is also readily available and not expensive.



Air-conditioned restaurant car on train 35 from Bangkok to Hat Yai.



The seafood dinner, 200 baht (£4 or \$6).



0:00 / 2:10

■ Useful bus & ferry connections...

Malacca (Melaka)...

Malacca is well worth a day's visit, as it has some of the oldest colonial buildings in SE Asia. Pictured right: The Stadthuys (town hall), church and clock tower on Malacca's main square.



- Kuala Lumpur to Malacca: Malacca is not on the rail network, but modern buses run by several companies run 2 or 3 times every hour from the Southern bus station in Kuala Lumpur, taking about 3 hours and costing 9 or 10 Ringgit one-way. The bus station in KL is known as BTS, Bandar Tasik Selatan, it has its own stop on the STAR line, KTM Komuter train line and KLIA rail link. Alternatively, take a train from KL to Tampin station (see the train timetable above), then take a bus or taxi from there (38 km). A taxi from Tampin to Malacca costs around 70-80 ringgit (£15 or \$23), and you'll usually find some taxis waiting at the station.
- Singapore to Malacca: There are regular buses from Singapore to Malacca taking about 5½ hours. Alternatively, take a train from Singapore to Tampin station (see the train timetable above), then take a bus or taxi from there (38 km). A taxi from Tampin to Malacca costs around 80 ringgit Ringgit (£16 or \$24).

Langkawi island...

- From Kuala Lumpur to Langkawi: Step 1, take the overnight 'Langkawi Express' sleeper train from Kuala Lumpur to either Alor Setar or Arau, see the [train timetable above](#). There is little to choose between the Alor Setar or Arau options. Step 2, from Alor Setar it's a short bus ride or Ringgit 15 taxi ride to the ferry terminal at Kuala Kedah. Step 3, the Langkawi Ferry (www.langkawi-ferry.com) sails from Kuala Kedah to Langkawi every 30 minutes between 07:00 & 19:00, no advance reservation necessary. Sailing time is 1 hour 30 minutes, the fare is Ringgit 23 each way. If you decide to go via Arau, it's a short taxi ride to the ferry terminal at Kuala Perlis, which is slightly closer to Langkawi than Kuala Kedah. www.langkawi-ferry.com sails from Kuala Perlis to Langkawi about every 30 minutes between 07:00 & 19:00, sailing time 1 hour 15 minutes, fare Ringgit 18 each way, no advance reservation necessary.
- From Singapore to Langkawi: Take the morning train from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, spend the afternoon in KL, then take the overnight sleeper train from KL to Alor Setar or Arau and follow the instructions above for travel from Kuala Lumpur to Langkawi.
- From Bangkok or southern Thailand to Langkawi: Take the International Express from Bangkok or Hat Yai to Arau, small station just across the border into Malaysia, see the [train timetable above](#). From Arau, it's a short taxi ride to the ferry jetty at Kuala Perlis. www.langkawi-ferry.com sails from Kuala Perlis to Langkawi about every 30 minutes between 07:00 & 19:00, sailing time 1 hour 15 minutes, fare Ringgit 18 each way, no advance reservation necessary.
- From Penang to Langkawi: www.langkawi-ferry.com operates a daily fast ferry direct from Penang to Langkawi island, leaving at 08:15 and taking 2 hour 45 minutes. The fare is about 60 Ringgit (£13 or \$17) one way, children 3-11 45 Ringgit, children under 3 free. The return departure from Langkawi to Penang is at 17:15. For times, fares and online booking, see www.langkawi-ferry.com. This ferry is the best option if you want to go to/from Penang itself.

Perhentian Islands...

The Perhentian Islands are relatively undeveloped islands off Malaysia's north eastern coast, excellent for scuba diving. The ideal way to reach the Perhentians is by overnight sleeper train from Kuala Lumpur or Singapore, taxi transfer then ferry:

- Take the overnight sleeper train from Kuala Lumpur or Singapore to either Tanah Merah or Wakaf Bahru stations, see the [Jungle Line section](#) for train times. The train fare is about 54 Ringgit (£11 or \$18) including a [2nd class sleeper](#). The overnight train from KL has both [2nd class sleepers](#) and [1st class 2-berth sleepers](#), the

overnight train from Singapore just has [2nd class sleepers](#), but even 2nd class sleepers are comfortable, air-conditioned and perfectly adequate. Taking the sleeper train saves a hotel bill, is an experience in itself, and can even save time compared to flying.

- Take a taxi from Tanah Merah or Wakaf Bahru to the main ferry port at Kuala Besut. Local taxis will be waiting for the train at either station, the taxi fare is 50 Ringgit (£10 or \$15), the journey time about 50 minutes from Wakaf Bahru or 30 minutes from Tanah Merah.
- Speedboats from Kuala Besut take about 30 minutes to reach the Perhentian islands, and depart 4–5 times daily 09:00–17:00 according to demand. The fare is about 70 Ringgit (£12/\$19) return. There are also slow boats which leave Kuala Besut at 08:30 and 14:30, taking 1.5 hours, fare about 45 Ringgit return. There's another (private) jetty at Tok Bali, but ferries from here are less frequent.

Cameron Highlands...

There are no trains to the Cameron Highlands, only buses & taxis, but the nearest stations are either Tapah Road or Ipoh. Ipoh is the better station to use, as Tapah Road station is 9km from Tapah town and the Rakyat Ekspres is non-stop at Tapah Road but all trains call at Ipoh.

- Take an express train from Singapore, Kuala Lumpur or Penang (Butterworth) to Ipoh, [see the timetable above](#).
- Take a bus from Ipoh to Tanah Rata in the Cameron Highlands. There are four buses a day, at 08:00, 11:00, 15:00, 18:00. The bus ride takes 3½ hours & costs around RM16.80 (£4). The bus station is a 10 minute walk from the rail station, but as there are several bus stations in Ipoh, make sure you head for the right one. You can usually get a ticket half an hour before the bus goes, but the sooner the better as they occasionally get full. The bus is spacious and air-con. The road winds up into the hills, with great views over the fields.
- Alternatively, a private taxi from Ipoh to Tanah Rata should cost around RM80 (£13) per taxi.
- [Feedback](#) from travellers making this connection would be welcome.

Kuala Lumpur Airport - fast rail link to city centre...

- The new 'KLIA Ekspres' train service links Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) with Kuala Lumpur Sentral Station. It runs every 15 minutes between 05:00 & 01:00 and takes 28 minutes non-stop. One-way fare is about RM 35, return RM 65. See www.kliaekspres.com for more information.

Batu Caves...

- Malaysian Railways 'KTM Komuter' suburban trains run regularly from KL Sentral to Batu Caves.

Phuket, Ko Samui, Ko Phangan, Ko Tao, Bridge on the River Kwai, Chiang Mai

See the Thailand page for connection information within Thailand to Phuket, Ko Samui, etc...

■ Singapore station information

The trains to Malaysia now all start from Woodlands Train Checkpoint...

Since 1 July 2011, the trains to Malaysia now leave from the Woodlands Train Checkpoint in the north of Singapore island just south of the causeway across the Johor Straits to Malaysia. Woodlands is about 13 miles north of Singapore city. Sadly, trains no longer leave from the [wonderful 1932-built art deco station](#) in central Singapore in Keppel Road, often referred to as Tanjong Pagar. [Map showing location of Singapore's Woodlands checkpoint station](#).

Passport & customs formalities leaving from or arriving at Woodlands...

You should arrive at Woodlands at least 30 minutes before your train departure, for passport formalities. Check-in opens promptly 30 minutes before departure of each train. You go through Singapore departure formalities then Malaysian immigration formalities at Woodlands before boarding the train. In the other direction, when arriving at Woodlands from Malaysia, Malaysian immigration formalities are carried out on board the train at Johor Bahru, but Singapore passport and customs formalities are undertaken at Woodlands checkpoint after you get off the train.

Woodlands station facilities & KTM ticket counter...

There is a KTM InterCity ticket counter at Woodlands station so you can buy tickets there. Only cash is accepted, no credit cards, so ideally get some cash before leaving central Singapore, but if you need cash there are ATMs across the street along the market area about 5 minutes walk from the station. The ticket counter will not sell tickets less than 20 minutes before the departure of each train. There are no food stalls inside Woodlands station but there's a small supermarket across the road, or stock up before leaving central Singapore.

How to get from central Singapore to Woodlands Train Checkpoint...

By MRT (metro) & bus: Step 1, take the MRT (mass rapid transit metro) from any downtown Singapore MRT station to Woodlands MRT station. MRT trains run every few minutes, fare S\$2.20, distance around 26.4 km, journey time around 45 minutes. Woodlands MRT station is 3.3 km (2 miles) from Woodlands Train Checkpoint. Step 2, take air-conditioned bus numbers 911 or 913 from Woodlands MRT station to Woodlands Train Checkpoint. The bus is easy to find, just downstairs from the MRT train, go to bus bay 11. The bus fare is S\$1.10, distance 3.3 km, journey time 10 minutes, buses run every 3 to 10 minutes all day (every 3 to

15 minutes after 7pm). The whole journey from central Singapore to Woodlands Train Checkpoint will take around 65 minutes and cost S\$3.30 (£2 or \$3), but plan to arrive at least half an hour before your train leaves for passport formalities. If you want to buy any supplies for the journey, buy them before arriving at Woodlands Train Checkpoint as there are few if any retail outlets there. See www.smrt.com.sg for a [journey planner](#) and a [MRT network map](#).

By taxi: A taxi from Singapore's central business district to Woodlands costs around S\$31 (£15 or US\$25) per taxi for the 24 km ride. Allow at least 40 minutes for the taxi journey, plus allow half an hour for passport formalities at Woodlands before the train leaves. If you want to buy any supplies for the journey, buy them before arriving at Woodlands Train Checkpoint as there are few if any retail outlets there.



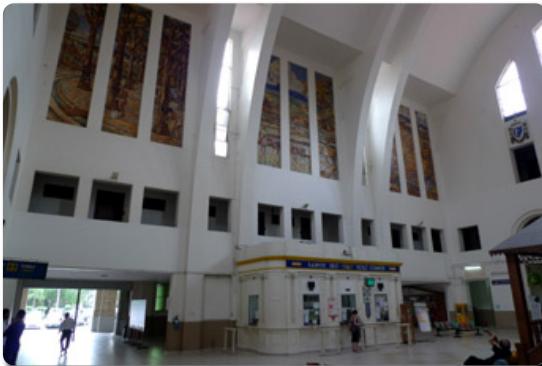
Woodlands: The single platform at Singapore's Woodlands Train Checkpoint.



A KTM InterCity train to Malaysia in the platform at Woodlands Train Checkpoint.

Singapore's wonderful 1932 art deco railway station finally closed on 30 June 2011...

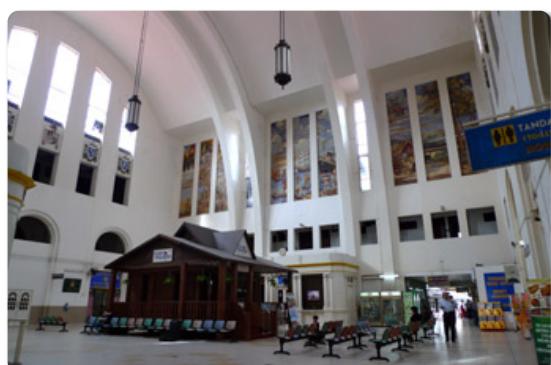
For almost 80 years, from 1932 until 30 June 2011, trains to Malaysia left from the faded colonial grandeur of Singapore's magnificent art-deco station in Keppel Road, sometimes known as Tanjong Pagar railway station. The station was designed by Singapore's oldest architectural firm Swan and Maclaren, with Italian sculptor Rudolfo Nolli responsible for the four figures on the station's facade representing Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Transport. The letters 'F M S R' on the front of the building stand for "Federated Malay States Railway", the railway's original title when Singapore & Malaysia were both part of British Malaya. A railway was first built on Singapore island in 1903, linking the port area with Woodlands in the north of the island, although for the first two decades passengers had to take a ferry from Woodlands across the Johor Strait and board another train to continue their journey up the Malay Peninsula. However, a causeway linking Singapore with Malaysia was built in 1923 and the railway was extended across it, finally allowing trains to run direct between Singapore and mainland Malaya. The trains used a temporary station until the present station opened in 1932. When Singapore split from Malaysia in 1965, the station and mainline railway remained the property of the Malaysian government, even though they were built on Singaporean territory. The existence of significant tracts of Malaysian land deep within Singapore island became a longstanding political thorn in Singapore's side, and the Singaporeans tried for years to buy or sequester the land so the railway could be closed and built over. Unfortunately, the Singaporean and Malaysian governments reached an agreement in 2010. The historic station in Singapore closed on 30 June 2011, and taking a train from this wonderful building is now a thing of the past. Trains now start/terminate at Woodlands, just south of the causeway to Malaysia, far less convenient for travellers and a totally backward step in transport terms. Sadly, in Singapore it seems they know the value of office blocks and shopping centres but not of city centre railway connections! From 1 July 2011 you have to take a taxi or the MRT (mass transit metro) plus a bus to Woodlands Train Checkpoint to pick up the trains to Malaysia there. Malaysian and Singaporean border control are co-located at Woodlands, so at least this saves the long stops for border control en route, cutting journey time. At least it's planned to preserve, rather than demolish, the old station building. As it used to be: [There's a good look round Singapore's railway station in this video](#) or see this [panorama photo inside Singapore station](#). [Map showing location of Singapore's old railway station](#)



As it used to be... Inside Singapore's old station, with the reservation counters. Note the murals!



Now closed... The imposing facade of Singapore's old railway station in Keppel Road...



■ Kuala Lumpur station information

Kuala Lumpur Sentral station...

As of 2001, long-distance KTM InterCity trains between Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Penang now use KL's shiny modern Sentral station and no longer stop at the famous Moorish-style railway station built by the British in 1910. However, the old station is still an operational station as suburban 'KTM Komuter' trains still stop there. By all means take a frequent suburban train from KL Sentral to reach the old station, which is a landmark in its own right. [Map showing location of the new KL Sentral and original historic KL stations.](#)



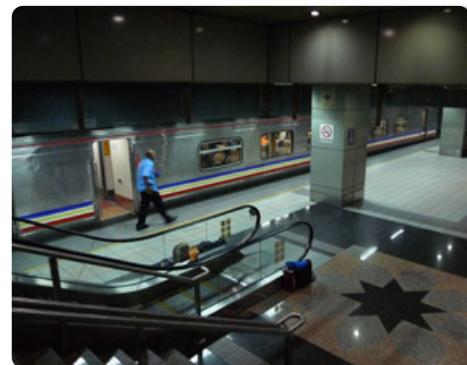
Kuala Lumpur Sentral Station: Main entrance & taxi rank.



Level 2. The main doors from the taxi rank are on the left. The KTM InterCity ticket office & left luggage are along the passageway in the background.



This is Level 1 downstairs. Access to the KTM Komuter train platforms is from this level. KTM InterCity trains have their own platforms, accessed from level 2.



The Rakyat Express from Butterworth to Singapore has arrived at KL Sentral. There are lifts, stairs & escalators up to Level 2.

KTM InterCity ticket office: Located on level 2, along the passageway on your left as you walk in through the main station doors from the taxi rank (the dark passageway in the background in the photo above left). Open for advance sales 07:00-21:30 every day. Sales for immediate travel 07:00-23:00 daily. An organised waiting system operates, ask for a numbered queuing ticket from the first counter on the left and wait for your number to be called. Can sell tickets for any train within Malaysia and for the trains from Malaysia to Hat Yai & Bangkok.

Left luggage office: You can leave your bags at the left luggage office, located directly opposite the KTM InterCity ticket counters on Level 2. Open every day 08:00 to 22:30. 3 Ringgit (£0.80 or \$1) for a small bag, 5 Ringgit (£1 or \$2) for a large bag.

Access to mainline trains: The stairs and escalators down to the KTM InterCity trains (platforms 1 & 2) start from Level 2, labelled 'Gate A' and 'Gate B' to left and right as you walk in through the main doors from the taxi rank. In the photo above left, 'Gate A' is in the far background on the far right of the photo. Actually, both gates go to the same pair of platforms.

Access to Komuter and KLIA airport trains: KTM Komuter trains leave from separate platforms accessed from the KTM Komuter area downstairs on Level 1. Access to KLIA airport trains is also from Level 1.

First class lounge: First class KTM InterCity passengers can use a VIP lounge with complimentary soft drinks and free WiFi. It opens an hour before each train departure. It's poorly signed: Go through the main doors from the taxi rank, walk forward, do a 180 degree turn up the escalator to the Level 3 walkway you can see in the photo above left, turn left at the top of the escalator and left again through the lift lobby to the door to the lounge.

Food & drink: There's a KFC on Level 2 and a MacDonald's and other food outlets just on Level 1. There are many 7-11 style shops to stock up for your train journey.

Kuala Lumpur's original Moorish-style railway station...

Built in 1910 and designed by Arthur Benison Hubback, KL's famous Moorish-style station served as KL's main station until superseded by KL Sentral in 2001. It's still used by commuter trains (below right) though intercity trains no longer call there. However, it's a landmark in its own right, and well worth a visit. Sadly, it's reported that the [Heritage Station Hotel](#) (which was part of the old 1911 station building and a good cheap choice) has now closed down. [More information about the station.](#)



Kuala Lumpur's old station... Above right, a KTM Komuter train calls.



Above left, in addition to the Singapore-KL-Ipoh-Penang intercity trains, regular modern 'ETS' trains link KL with Ipoh. Above right, you get a good view of the old station as you pass it on the metro.

■ Butterworth & Penang information

Penang is an island, and the main town on Penang Island is called Georgetown, once the capital of British Malaya. The railway station for Penang is Butterworth, located on the mainland directly opposite Georgetown. When you arrive by train at Butterworth station, you go up a walkway from the station to the ferry terminal to take the ferry to Georgetown (Penang). Georgetown has some excellent British colonial buildings, interesting museums and temples, a large Chinatown and a Little India. Well worth a visit!

[Map showing station & ferry terminal locations in Penang & Butterworth](#)

Butterworth station...

Butterworth station has a ticket office, open 07:00–22:30 every day (with breaks 09:00–10:00 & 16:00–17:30). They accept MasterCard & Visa. Butterworth station has a money changer, but no ATMs, nor is there any left luggage office. There's not much in the way of food shops or stalls at Butterworth, so when catching a train it's best to stock up before you leave Georgetown. If you get stuck, you might find a shop at the bus station next door. Temporary station: As from summer 2011, there's a temporary station at Butterworth, just a minute or two further walk from the ferry, whilst the original station is rebuilt as part of KL-Penang-Padang Besar railway modernisation project.



Butterworth station: Walking off the end of the platforms at Butterworth, onto the concourse towards the ferry...

Here, the two direct Bangkok to Butterworth sleeping-cars of the International Express have arrived at Butterworth...

The ferry from Butterworth to Penang...

Ferries shuttle back & forth between Butterworth & Penang (Georgetown) every 10 minutes or so between 05:00 & 24:00, crossing time around 15 minutes. The fare is 1.20 Ringgit outward, paid by putting the coins into the turnstiles. A staffed kiosk can change notes into coins for the ferry. In the other direction the ferry is free for foot passengers. An alternative to the ferry is to take a taxi the long way round via the lengthy Penang Bridge, about 60 Ringgit (£11 or \$17) from a central Penang hotel to Butterworth station.



On board the ferry, on the passenger deck above the vehicles, with great views of Georgetown approaching.



The Penang ferry: This is one of the double-deck Butterworth to Penang ferries, linking the railway station with Georgetown.

KTM ticket office at Georgetown, Penang: Open 08:30-16:00 daily.

You'll find a small KTM ticket office at the ferry terminal in Georgetown on Penang island, which saves having to take the ferry to Butterworth to book your train tickets. The office is open daily from 08:30 to 16:00 (may close 14:00-15:00 for lunch), and can sell all train tickets for Malaysia and from Butterworth to Bangkok.

Hotels in Penang...

For hotels in Penang, use the hotel search engine below or see [TripAdvisor's Penang hotels page](#). The most famous & historic place to stay in Penang is of course the historic [Eastern & Oriental Hotel](#), around £150 for a double room.

■ The Eastern & Oriental Express

Singapore to Bangkok by luxury train: See the [Eastern & Oriental Express page](#)

The ultra-luxurious [Eastern & Oriental Express](#) runs once, twice or sometimes 3 times each month between Singapore, Penang and Bangkok, usually including a city tour in Penang and a brief diversion to Kanchanaburi and the famous Bridge on the River Kwai. It also runs some rail cruises to Chiang Mai and other destinations. Operated by the same company that runs the superb Venice Simplon Orient Express, it uses sleeping-cars originally built in Japan for the New Zealand Railways Wellington-Auckland 'Silver Star' sleeper train (which ran 1972 to 1979). See www.orient-expresstrains.com for times, departure dates, prices & online booking. The Eastern & Oriental gets great reviews from travellers, and it's easily the most luxurious way to travel from Singapore to Bangkok, seeing both Malaysia and the famous Bridge on the River Kwai on the way. In other words, it isn't cheap, but you certainly won't regret taking this train!



The Eastern & Oriental Express, seen at Butterworth.



The Eastern & Oriental Express' elegant dining car... Courtesy of Petra O'Neill

■ London to Singapore overland

If you have the time (and we're talking a minimum of 3½ weeks one-way), you can travel from London to Singapore overland. The links below cover travel in either direction, from London or to London:

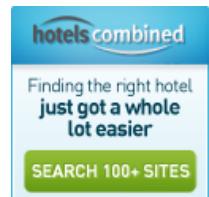
- Step 1: [London to Moscow by train](#). Daily departures, 2 nights, from about £160 one-way with sleeper. Spend at least 1 night in Moscow.
- Step 2: [Moscow to Beijing by Trans-Siberian Railway](#) Two trains a week, 6 nights, from about \$450 or £225 one-way in 4-bed sleeper. Spend at least 1 night in Beijing.
- Step 3: [Beijing to Hanoi by train](#) Two trains a week, 2 nights, about \$150 or £75 one-way in soft sleeper. Spend at least 1 night in Hanoi.
- Step 4: [Hanoi to Saigon by train](#) Several trains daily, 2 nights. Why not stop off to see Hue or Hoi An? About \$80 or £40 one-way in soft sleeper.
- Step 5: [Saigon-Phnom Penh by bus](#) Daily, 1 day. Spend at least 1 night in PP.
- Step 6: [Phnom Penh-Battambang by train or bus, bus to the frontier, train to Bangkok](#).
- Step 7: [Bangkok to Singapore by train](#). Daily, 2 nights, from £40 or \$80 one-way including sleeper for both nights.

There aren't any travel agencies who can arrange the whole trip, so you will need to plan it out and arrange each stage of the journey yourself. It's an exercise in project management! Unless time is absolutely no object, you should book the key sections in advance through various travel agencies, for example, book London–Moscow through a UK European train ticketing agency such as DB's UK office or europeanrail.com, then book Moscow–Beijing & Beijing–Hanoi through a local Russian agency such as Svezhy Veter or www.realrussia.co.uk. Tickets for other parts of the trip, for example, Hanoi–Saigon–Phnom Penh–Bangkok can all be bought locally, as you go along. You'll need to pre-arrange visas for Belarus, Russia, possibly Mongolia, China & Vietnam, and in many ways complying with the various visa requirements (and in some cases, requirements for confirmed onward tickets to be held) is actually the biggest hassle, not buying the tickets for the trains, so check this out carefully using the relevant embassy websites.

Where do you start? First, read through the seat61 pages linked above. Then [sketch out your itinerary using a simple spreadsheet like this](#), deciding where and for how long you want to stop off. Next, check out the visa situation for each country. Finally, follow the advice on each seat61 page to buy tickets for each train journey that you want to pre-book.

■ Hotels in Singapore, Malaysia & Southeast Asia

◀◀◀ **Search all the main hotel booking sites at once...**



I'm a big fan of www.hotelscombined.com as it checks all the main hotel booking sites (Opodo, Expedia, Booking.com, Hotels.com, AsiaRooms, LateRooms etc.) to find the widest choice of hotels & the cheapest rates. Try it and see!

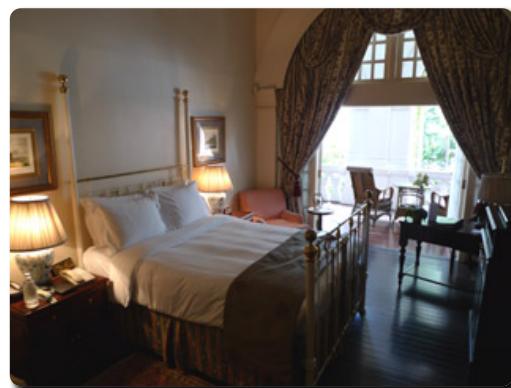
You might also want to check Tripadvisor: [Tripadvisor Singapore hotels](#) [Tripadvisor Malaysia hotels](#)

Raffles Hotel, Singapore... Book it here

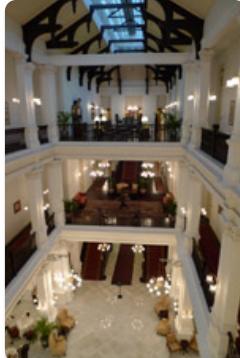
Well, it has to be Raffles, hasn't it? A major Singapore landmark and a tourist attraction in its own right, all rooms are suites and will set you back upwards from £300 per night. But it's one of the world's greatest hotels, and one of several famous Asian hotels founded by the Sarkies brothers. The main building dates from 1899, although the two side wings date from 1889 and 1896. Even if you can't afford to stay there, at least drop in for a refreshing Singapore sling in the famous Long Bar, a rather more affordable, but still steep £6 each. At least the peanuts are free. Remember to follow tradition by dropping the peanut shells straight onto the floor... The hotel's own website is www.Raffles.com. Book a room at Raffles online.



Raffles Hotel: The incomparable Raffles Hotel, Singapore, a little colonial island in a sea of modern high-rise blocks.



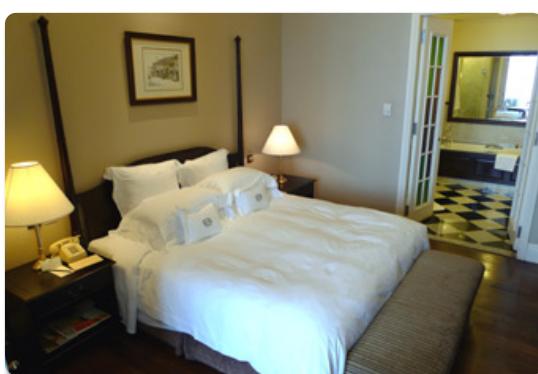
A suite at Raffles: This is a Grand Suite in the main building, room 339 / 340 with sitting room, bedroom, bathroom and private veranda...



(Left) Raffles hotel lobby... (Right) The Long Bar at Raffles Hotel: If you can't afford to stay there, at least have a 'Singapore Sling' in the famous Long Bar. The bar was originally located in the ballroom, a single-storey extension built in 1915 on the front of the hotel where the driveway is now. The Long Bar was first moved from one side of the ballroom to the other, then moved again in 1989 when the hotel was refurbished and the ballroom demolished. It's now located at the rear of the hotel in a modern block constructed in 1989.

Eastern & Oriental Hotel, Georgetown, Penang... Book it here

If you like Raffles, try another of the Sarkies brothers' hotels, the equally historic [Eastern & Oriental Hotel](#) in Georgetown, Penang, equally historic but a bit cheaper at around £150 for a double room. It's grand, well-located with gardens to the rear backing the sea.



Backpacker hostels...

[www.hostelbookers.com](#): If you're on a tight budget, don't forget the backpacker hostels. Hostelbookers has online booking of cheap private rooms or dorm beds in backpacker hostels in Singapore and most other world cities at rock-bottom prices.

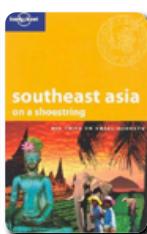
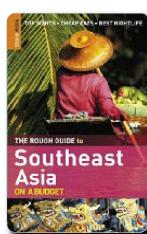


■ Guidebooks

I strongly recommend investing in a decent guidebook. It may seem an unnecessary expense, but it's a tiny fraction of what you're spending on your whole trip. You will see so much more, and know so much more about what you're looking at, if you have a decent guidebook. For the independent traveller, I have no hesitation in recommending either the Lonely Planets or the Rough Guides. Both provide an excellent level of practical information and historical and political background. You will not regret buying one!

Click the images to buy from Amazon.co.uk

Or buy direct from the [Lonely Planet](#) website, with shipping worldwide. Alternatively, you can download just the chapters or areas you need in .PDF format from the [Lonely Planet Website](#), from around £2.99 or US\$4.95 a chapter.



■ Singapore city tour

Buy a ticket for Singapore's hop-on, hop-off Open Top Bus Tour...

City Sightseeing's red-and-yellow open top tour buses are now a familiar site in 100 major cities on 6 continents. They do a hop-on, hop-off tour bus ticket for Singapore and you can buy a ticket online before you go, redeemable on any day you like within 3 months of buying it, see [www.city-sightseeing.com](#).



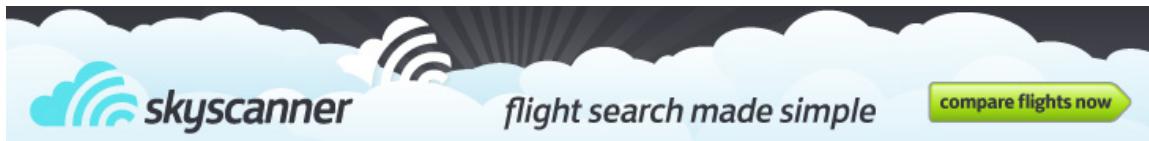
■ Flights

Find the cheapest flight...

Overland travel by train & bus around Southeast Asia is an essential part of the experience, so once there, don't cheat and fly, stay on the ground! But a long-haul flight might be unavoidable to reach Asia in the first place. For flights to Singapore, two airlines stand out:

- Singapore Airlines, www.singaporeair.com, consistently voted one of the world's best (and I wouldn't disagree, as far as airlines go).
- Virgin Atlantic Airlines, www.virginatlantic.com, who now fly direct from the UK to Singapore, another good choice for both price & service.

Use the *Skyscanner* search tool to compare flight prices & routes worldwide across 600 airlines...



Lounge passes...

Make the airport experience a little more bearable with a VIP lounge pass, it's not as expensive as you think! See www.loungepass.com

■ Travel insurance

Get travel insurance, it's essential...

Never travel overseas without travel insurance from a reliable insurer, with at least £1m or preferably £5m medical cover. It should also cover cancellation and loss of cash (up to a limit) and belongings. An annual multi-trip policy is usually cheaper than several single-trip policies even for just 2 or 3 trips a year (I have an annual policy myself). Here are some suggested insurers. Seat61 gets a small commission if you buy through these links.



🇬🇧 In the UK, try [Columbus Direct](http://ColumbusDirect.co.uk), or use Confused.com to compare prices and policy features across a range of insurance companies.

🇬🇧 If you have a pre-existing medical condition or are over 65 (no age limit), see www.JustTravelCover.com.

🇦🇺 🇳🇿 🇮🇪 🇪🇺 If you're resident in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland or the EU, try [Columbus Direct's other websites](http://ColumbusDirect.ie).

🇺🇸 🇨🇦 If you're resident in the USA or Canada, try [Travel Guard USA](http://TravelGuardUSA.com).

Get a spare credit card, designed for foreign travel with no currency exchange loading & low or no ATM fees...

It costs nothing to take out an extra credit card. If you keep it in a different part of your luggage so you're not left stranded if your wallet gets stolen, this is a form of extra travel insurance in itself. In addition, some credit cards are significantly better for overseas travel than others. Martin Lewis's www.moneysavingexpert.com/travel/cheap-travel-money explains which UK credit cards have the lowest currency exchange commission loadings when you buy something overseas, and the lowest cash withdrawal fees when you use an ATM abroad. Taking this advice can save you quite a lot on each trip compared to using your normal high-street bank credit card! You can save money on ATM charges and exchange rates using a Caxton FX euro currency Visa Card, or indeed the multi-currency 'Global Traveller' Visa Card, [find out about these cards & sign up here](#).

Get an international SIM card...

Mobile phones can cost a fortune to use abroad, and if you're not careful you can return home to find some huge bills waiting for you. I've known people run up a £1,000 bill in data charges just by leaving their iPhone connected during a simple trip to Europe. However, if you [buy a global SIM card for your mobile phone](#) from a company such as www.Go-Sim.com you can slash the cost by up to 85% and limit any damage to the amount you have pre-paid. It cuts call costs in 175 countries worldwide, and you can receive incoming calls and texts for free in 75 countries. It's pay-as-you-go, so no nasty bills when you get home. It also works for laptop or PDA data access. A Go-Sim account and any credit on it doesn't expire if it's not between trips, unlike some others, so a Go-Sim phone number becomes your 'global phone number' for life.

